

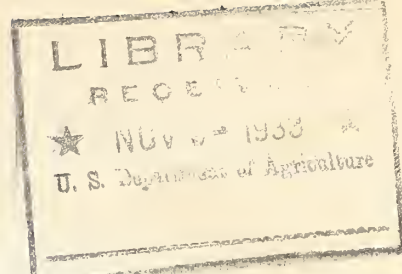
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ADJUSTING HOG PRODUCTION IN MISSOURI



A radio talk by D. C. Wood, Extension Economist, Columbia, Missouri, delivered in the Land Grant College radio program, Wednesday, September 20, 1933, broadcast by a network of 48 NBC radio stations.

Since the selection of a hog production adjustment plan has come up for consideration, we, in Missouri, have gotten the impression that the full range of problems to be encountered elsewhere in terms of regions or states is right here at home with us within our own boundaries. And this situation is not surprising as Missouri has an unusual diversity of climate, topography, soils and, therefore, of types of farming. However, in Missouri, as in other corn belt states, hogs have an important place on the typical farm, not as an independent enterprise but as a part of a combination of interdependent farm enterprises. That is the reason why a hog adjustment plan presents more difficult problems than an adjustment plan for a cash crop. Adjusting hog production can so easily affect the economic position of other farm enterprises with which it is directly or indirectly associated.

Now, when Missouri producers began to consider an adjustment plan for hogs we found that we did not agree very well among ourselves. When we considered corn acreage reduction as a means of adjusting hog production the producers from our surplus corn areas offered no objections. But, producer from areas where they feed more corn than they grow and where they buy corn from the outside felt that this plan would discriminate against their region in favor of other areas. Unfavorable reactions also developed within areas where the production of stock hogs and stock or cattle predominates. Producers in these areas foresaw a weakened future demand for their pigs and cattle.

Later, Missouri hog producers held two state meetings at which the various proposals for an adjustment plan were considered. These opportunities of getting heads together locally and further exchanges of thoughts regionally and nationally at the Des Moines and Chicago hog adjustment conferences have clarified the situation. It may now be reasonably assumed that the hog adjustment plan will have taken the full range of problems into account and will, therefore, operate soundly to attain its purpose.

Missouri producers favor a hog allotment plan, possibly supplemented by a corn acreage reduction equivalent to the reduction in hogs. They are, however, especially concerned that the relative position of the state and its various areas as to corn and hogs shall remain unchanged. They also believe that the corn-hog adjustments should not disturb the relative position of other classes of livestock. They recognize the need of an emergency measure to materially reduce marketings in sight for the new hog marketing year beginning October first. It is also clear to them that the plan should include means of controlling live hog weights. They assume that hog benefits will be equitably distributed between producer and feeder.

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But, the problem which should be emphasized lies in the producer's lap. That problem is the matter of acting collectively now that an adjustment plan offers that long needed and desired opportunity. Failure of all producers to cooperate in this case can have behind it but one explanation,-- a lack of understanding of the corn-hog situation. Let us go into this for a moment.

During the last twenty years some eleven million horses and mules have faded out of the picture. But, the American farmer is still growing the feed for them, -- feed that has no market, -- but feed that nevertheless reaches the market as grain and livestock. The result is that for some years we have had a large volume of grain and livestock to sell. And it has taken a mighty low price to move it.

During the war and for some time after the war our export demand for lard and other pork products was very large. During the past few years it has dwindled to small proportions. But, the American farmer is still producing hogs for Europe. The average farm price of hogs for June was very little over one-half of the price farmers were getting for hogs at that season before the war. The prices farmers paid for goods they brought in June was actually higher than prewar level. Nevertheless the June first pig report issued by the United States Department of Agriculture indicated that at that time the number of sows due to farrow this fall was thirteen per cent larger than the sows that actually farrowed last fall. Apparently, we are still producing hogs for Europe. But the plain indications are that our export outlets will continue to be relatively inadequate.

If, as provided for by the emergency measure, four million pigs and one million piggy sows are removed from the market by October first, sixteen per cent of the total marketings in sight for the new hog marketing year beginning October first will have been eliminated by this decisive step. If producers cooperate fully during this period, the removal of that potential tonnage from the market will help the immediate situation and will repay producers well for their united action. But, the emergency measure is merely a temporary stop-gap. Adjustment of the hog situation isn't that quick or easy.

There isn't a doubt as to what the corn-hog situation is. Production in both cases is in much too great volume to move at reasonable farm prices. Missouri producers and producers elsewhere will do well to recognize these facts and to join hands in putting their house in order.

The set-up for united action is here.